

Bid to build house at North Berwick junction refused

A family's bid to build a new home on land they use to grow Christmas trees has been narrowly rejected after planners raised fears over its access.

The proposals for the site at Dirleton Avenue, North Berwick, involved a driveway which opens into the middle of a four way junction controlled by traffic lights.

But while planners argued that allowing another home on the site would 'intensify' traffic at a 'sensitive' junction, agents for the applicant pointed out there would be fewer vehicle visits than there were while it was operating as a business.

And they argued there was no record of any accidents at the junction despite traffic from a dental practice, the Christmas tree site and a residential property using it already.

A meeting of East Lothian Council's planning committee was told planners had recommended the housing plan be refused because of the increased traffic at the junction.

They had also raised concerns about the impact of the loss of the site, described by the applicants as a 'hobby garden' and 'business with a small 'b' on established trees on the land and wildlife,

Local ward councillor Liz Allan questioned why if there was a problem with traffic using the access no restrictions were in

place against traffic coming in and out with the business.

She said: "I really can't see very much additional flow of traffic coming from one person living there when they are still using it for business practices."

Agent for the application Tony Thomas told the committee the reasons given by officer did not 'stand up to scrutiny'.

He said: "This application is from a local family, involved in a local school and a variety of local groups, looking to have an urban family home on a vacant site they have owned for 12 years."

He added the house had been designed to Passivhaus standards and that the applicant was an architect himself who had created a home which 'in its own small way' would contribute to climate change.

Mr Thomas told the committee it was unlikely the family would need to use their car regularly at its town centre location and argued the junction was actually safer to exit because the red lights of the traffic controls could be seen by drivers.

Fellow ward councillor Jeremy Findlay said he did not believe the addition of the new house would 'intensify' traffic or impact on the site.

Councillor Norman Hampshire, planning convenor, disagreed saying that the existing access which it was claimed preceded the traffic controls now in place at the junction would not have been allowed to be developed under current council policy.

He said: "The situation is wrong, it is dangerous. A car making a manoeuvre from that junction at any time is making a judgement on the lights there but with no light in front of it."

Councillors supported officers recommendation to refuse

planning permission by six votes to five with councillors Norman Hampshire, Andrew Forrest, Colin McGinn, Shona McIntosh, John McMillan and Colin Yorkston supporting refusal.

Councillors Liz Allan, Donna Collins, Jeremy Findlay, Neil Gilbert and Kenny McLeod offering to approve the plans.

By Marie Sharp Local Democracy Reporter